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A Menu of Independent Initiatives by Republics of the Former
USSR Toward a Denuclearized and Demilitarized World

As the republics of the former USSR restructure themselves and their relations, it would serve a number of urgent purposes--to improve their own security, to reassure the world about their nuclear weapons, to encourage reciprocal action by the US and other nuclear states, to free resources from their military budgets, to discourage nuclear proliferation, and to help bring about a safer, more peaceful world--for these republics to lead the way, by concrete initiatives, in a worldwide campaign toward a denuclearized and demilitarized world.

Such a campaign, launched by these initiatives and calling for reciprocal action by the US and others, would aim at completing or achieving very substantial progress by the end of the century toward:

--the abolition of tactical nuclear weapons: a "zero option" for such weapons, including air-launched as well as those based on land or sea.

--the elimination of MIRVd land-based missiles, the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons to minimal deterrent levels, and ultimately the abolition of nuclear weapons.

--the delegitimization and renunciation of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any other role than the deterrence of nuclear attack: backed up by the concrete steps above and by parallel declarations by nuclear states that they will under no circumstances make first-use of nuclear weapons or use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

--Comparable steps for other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological.

--the delegitimation and elimination of covert action, including clandestine support for paramilitary campaigns, coups, assassinations or terrorism.

--the radical reduction--by 75-90%--of global military budgets, the near-elimination of international traffic in arms--in particular, offensive weapons including tanks, long-range aircraft and missiles--and the conversion of military-industrial complexes, redirecting these resources--i.e., most of what currently amounts to almost \$1 trillion a year worldwide--to the peaceful purposes of humanity and to sustaining global ecology.

Why Independent Initiatives?

All of these goals--and concrete initiatives like those described below--could and should be declared and implemented independently by the United States, regardless of the action of others. Likewise, these goals and specific steps should be the object of bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Why, then, independent initiatives by Russia and the other republics? Because otherwise, nothing is likely to happen, for a long time. And a rare historical moment--when old myths are being discarded in one part of the world and a new start is being made--will have been missed, perhaps irretrievably.

For a generation during the Brezhnev era, the misguided pursuit of "parity" led the Soviet Union deeply astray, as it reproduced American errors in nuclear policy. The changes suggested below simply correct some of those errors; they are, in fact, wise, prudent--and overdue--whether or not the US follows suit immediately, as it certainly should.

The sad truth is that American officials are still in the grip of an "old way of thinking" on these matters no less delusional and inertial than the ideological framework from which the former Soviet republics are now so dramatically awakening. The impact of initiatives such as those suggested below offers by far the best chance that these officials will see the light: or feel the heat, of domestic political pressure. But there is no guarantee.

This is not to discount the importance of further negotiations, bilateral and multilateral, but to recognize that progress in such negotiations depends on challenging and discarding illusions held on both sides over the past generation. Someone must be first to make this challenge, accompanied by concrete actions, and it is clearly not going to be the present US administration.

To change course like this--in advance of the other superpower--has obvious political dangers. It may even expose those advocating or deciding upon such change to the false charge of weakening their country's security: in effect, treason. Even to contemplate facing such a charge takes strong nerves, and a deep sense of patriotism and purpose. To refute it requires exposing the fallacies of the old official thinking it reflects, and to admit past national errors; that too takes political courage.

But that kind of courage--rare anywhere, anytime, and not now evident in Washington--has been dramatically, unprecedentedly on display in Moscow and the republics over the last five years, above all in the last month. The concerns addressed here are fully worthy of it.

Each of the steps below is meant to encourage emulation and reciprocation, and has good prospects of achieving this eventually. But each one of them, separately, is worth undertaking even though that response is uncertain and might, in particular cases, be long delayed.

The point is not, at all, to give up on the US as a negotiating partner and an actor of utmost importance in the pursuit of nuclear sanity: but no longer to wait on it, to do what makes utmost sense independently, for the security and survival of the republics and of all humanity.

A SELECTION OF INDEPENDENTLY WORTHWHILE INITIATIVES BY THE REPUBLICS--OR CENTRAL BODY--CONTROLLING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(1) Declare the international goal of eliminating tactical nuclear weapons worldwide--a "zero option" for tactical nuclear weapons--and a universal renunciation of "first use" of nuclear weapons, to be implemented not only in declarations but in inventory, deployment, doctrine and renunciation of tacit or explicit threats.

As initiatives toward this goal:

--dismantle and destroy--not merely, remove to Russia--all tactical weapons from East Europe, and from republics of the former USSR outside Russia, including air-launched weapons. Call for the removal of all such weapons from Western Europe, thus creating in short order a large "nuclear weapons free zone" in the former area of confrontation.

--remove and destroy all weapons from naval surface ships. Call on all other navies to do likewise.

--reiterate the USSR's renunciation of first use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances--drawing attention to the above steps as decisive, concrete steps to implement this policy--and call on the US and other nuclear powers to join in this commitment, and to make comparable concrete steps.

--announce a phased schedule for the destruction of all tactical nuclear warheads and missiles remaining in Russia, calling on the US and other nuclear powers to reciprocate.

--international studies should be instituted on the best method of disposing of the nuclear materials from these dismantled weapons (rather than, as in the INF Treaty, reusing it for weapons). Meanwhile, weapons removed should be tagged, registered and placed in secure monitored storage.

International inspection and monitoring of all these processes and storage should be invited. Destruction could take place in central locations in republics where the weapons are now located, either by initiative of the republics themselves or whatever body retains authority over the weapons.

(2) Reiterate call for prompt negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban, first between the republics and the US, then including all nuclear powers.

As an immediate initiative to this end:

--All republics should announce a permanent halt, or a prolonged moratorium, on nuclear testing throughout the former USSR: if the latter, a minimum of three years subject to extension, to be continued indefinitely if joined by the US.

--Or, independently, the President of the Russian Republic could decree on the same basis an immediate suspension of testing at the Novaya Zemlya site, following the example of Kazakhstan in ending testing at Semipalatinsk. (Either of these moves would simply formalize a commitment to what has amounted to an undeclared moratorium, with only one test, nearly a year ago, in the last two years).

(3) Declare the goal of eliminating MIRVd land-based missiles as soon as possible, and reducing all strategic warheads by the end of the century down to a maximum of 1000 each for the US and former USSR--preferably much less--limiting the function of nuclear weapons solely to the deterrence of nuclear attack.

This would mean consciously and explicitly renouncing--ultimately, on both sides--certain futile and destabilizing roles for strategic weapons: including "damage-limiting" by means of "preemption," "hard-target counterforce," "launch on warning," and "decapitation," along with "prompt" counterforce retaliation and, above all, "extended deterrence" posing the threat of escalation to a disarming first strike in response to non-nuclear or limited nuclear provocation.

Such current functions on both sides call for force characteristics indistinguishable from "first-strike capability," thus causing mutual apprehension, mutual false alarm dangers--especially in crises--continual "force modernization" including endless warhead and missile testing, and a reciprocal arms race, costly and dangerous in itself and ruling out an effective campaign against further proliferation.

These dangerous pressures can be eliminated only by eschewing the objectives above and modifying force posture accordingly.

Once that is accepted, other risks can be reduced, along with costs, by reducing the force structure to "minimal deterrent" levels.

By deciding on and declaring these doctrinal changes, authorities controlling strategic nuclear weapons in the territory of the former USSR can free themselves to act--independently of the laborious START negotiations--to improve their national security and to transform the international environment for further negotiations by simply dismantling and destroying weapons that serve only misguided and now-discarded functions such as those above, inviting international inspection and monitoring of this process.

To postpone these moves until the US proves willing to recognize and redress its own past errors by making comparable moves simultaneously is simply to reaffirm past mutual illusions about necessary and feasible force characteristics and functions and dangerously false notions about the importance of "parity." And it is to accept perhaps irretrievable delay.

Specific initiatives which are timely now include:

--Strategic weapons now in Kazakhstan, the Ukraine and Byelorussia should be dismantled and destroyed, not merely removed from these republics. Destruction could, for example, take place under international inspection within these republics, either at the initiative of the republics themselves or by decision of whatever body retains authority over nuclear weapons.

(With the dismantling and destruction of tactical nuclear weapons as well, these republics can commit themselves to remain "nuclear weapons-free zones," as they have aspired to be).

--Multi-warhead, highly accurate, vulnerable land-based missiles--in particular, the entire SS-18 force, whose deployment was a dangerous, destabilizing strategic error in the beginning from the point of view argued above--should be dismantled and their warheads destroyed, under international inspection, without the delay of further negotiations.

(3) Acknowledge and promulgate recognition of an urgent international interest in the rigor and reliability of control, storage and operational handling of all existing nuclear weapons--including those in process of dismantlement and destruction--and of all fissionable material, which must be demonstrated by acceptance of systematic and intrusive international inspection and monitoring of relevant processes and facilities inside national territories.

--In line with this, Russia and the other republics should not only accept but call for, encourage and support international understanding, inspection and monitoring of existing and improved measures of control, inventory management, secure storage and operational and logistical practices relating to all nuclear weapons and fissionable materials on their own territories.

(4) Demand prolongation and strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty, foregoing any tests or development that arguably violate or erode this constraint.

Initiatives not relating to nuclear weapons

(5) Declare the goal of a radical reduction worldwide in the production, deployment, and transfer by sale or otherwise of tanks, long-range aircraft and missiles: thus, the radical reduction of international commerce in armaments.

The context for this, ideally, would be the general adoption of "non-offensive defense" as the basis for national defense postures, to be implemented by mutually coordinated planning and reciprocated initiatives on the model of the USSR's unilateral reduction of offensive tank forces in East Germany and elsewhere in East Europe, initiated in December, 1988.

--As an initiative toward this end, Russia and the rest of the republics of the former USSR would eliminate--or radically reduce--the production and sale or transfer abroad of such weapons, while radically reducing their internal deployment.

The republics would press a worldwide campaign for elimination or drastic reduction of production and transfer through sale or military aid of such weapons supporting offensive postures, which constitute the bulk of the international arms trade. This would be accompanied by a campaign of educating military staffs throughout the world on the principles and merits of "non-offensive defense."

Thus, by education, diplomatic pressure and example--including, of course, sharp reduction in the overall defense budgets of the republics--the states of the former USSR would aim at the drastic reduction--by more than 75%--of the military budgets of the Third World and those of the NATO powers, along with their own.

(6) Aim at the delegitimation of Covert Action worldwide, setting an example by eliminating the institutional capabilities of the KGB for external covert action, while discussing and negotiating the multilateral elimination of such activities worldwide.

Public discussion of the transformation of the KGB, under new leadership after the failed coup, has mentioned the severing of its "FBI"-like or domestic security functions and of its military forces, thus allegedly rendering it analogous to a "Western-style intelligence agency."

But this would leave it not only with capabilities--to be retained--for the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence, but with a formidable apparatus for external covert action--like the CIA's Directorate of Operations, which is also, with the ending of the Cold War, overdue for elimination--ranging from clandestine support of paramilitary forces to support of coups, assassinations and terrorism.

To legitimate and institutionalize such "deniable" capabilities is inconsistent with aspirations to democracy--whether in the US, the former USSR or elsewhere--and to a peaceful world order. The role of KGB leadership in the recent coup has made this danger vivid; it is an unprecedented opportunity for Russia and the other republics to show leadership in delegitimizing and dismantling such functions and capabilities.

It would serve this purpose--and the more far-reaching purpose of educating the publics of other states to undertake similar challenge, examination and dismantling--to open the files of the KGB on past covert political and paramilitary action, not only by the USSR but by other nations: i.e., to publish "The KGB Papers."

Sept. 18, 1991

TO: JIM GARRISON

FROM: DAN ELLSBERG

Dear Jim,

I look forward very much to talking with you this afternoon. This is a "talking paper" which I plan to discuss with people in Moscow between September 25 and October 6. I hope and expect to see, among others, Andrei Kokoshin, Georgi and Alexei Arbatov, Yevgeny Velikhov, and Sergei Kapitsa. (Please let me know others--with telephone numbers--that you think might be appropriate. I am particularly anxious to get in touch with Shevardnadze; in that connection, I enclose an earlier memo--sent to Moscow via Sagdeev--which refers to him. Do you think there is any chance of seeing Gorbachev? I expect that both of them would be very receptive to the suggestions here).

My suggestions are very similar to those in the recent National Academy of Sciences Report, except that I am presenting them not as goals for bilateral negotiations but as possible "independent initiatives" (I avoid the term, "unilateral actions") by the republics or what remains of a central authority over nuclear weapons.

I am sure there will be strong resistance to the idea of further initiatives on their part--without assurance of reciprocation by the US, which I don't think can be honestly held out--yet I think the case must be made to them now nevertheless.

I think it is a valid case; the time for such initiatives is now, before the republics latch onto the nuclear weapons on their territories and become committed to "old thinking"; and I don't have any confidence that the US Administration will move in a timely way to implement these changes bilaterally, even in the face of the daunting prospect of 5-15 new nuclear states.

If the central authorities--in whatever time they have left--or successor regimes in the republics move in the direction I suggest, they will contribute over time (not immediately, unfortunately, but perhaps after a year or so) to the progressive demilitarization of the West, which offers them their only chance of aid substantial enough to meet their needs (diverted from current military budgets).

If, on the other hand, the new republics reproduce old errors of the US and Soviet Union in their military posture--while waiting for the US to be forthcoming in arms control negotiations--they sustain Western military budgets and doom their chances of major aid, while foregoing the chance to make real advances toward stability, peace and greater security.